PR
6023
L9677th

THRENODIES SKETCHES AND OTHER POEMS

10/1/22

1 UCL

THE LIBRARY
OF
THE UNIVERSITY
OF CALIFORNIA
LOS ANGELES

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/threnodiessketch00luceiala

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Fifth Edition, enlarged. Royal 16mo. 1s. net

Thysia

AN ELEGY IN FORTY-FIVE SONNETS

MR. FREDERIC HARRISON, in *The Nineteenth Century*: "A tiny volume of sonnets, which I hold to be of exquisite quality. . . . There is in these daily devotions a poignant ring, a vivid reality, an intense realism, which mark them off from all literary elegies of any kind. . . . They have that pathos inscribed on marble in the best Greek epitaphs. . . . To my ear their language has a melody and a purity such as no living poet can surpass."

Times: "A series of *in memoriam* sonnets . . . which claim respect by the genuineness of their feeling and the polished simplicity of their diction."

The Nation: "So unerringly does he achieve that pinnacle of poetic art, simplicity. . . . we may almost say of them, that their sorrow has made 'sorrow more beautiful than beauty's self' . . . Such pure, unaffected music . . . will surely not be 'alms for oblivion.'"

LONDON: G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.

Threnodies, Sketches
and Other Poems

Threnodies, Sketches

and Other Poems

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"THYSIA"

Morton Luce

LONDON
G. BELL AND SONS, LTD.
1910

CHISWICK PRESS: CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

PR
6023
L9677th

PREFATORY NOTE

THE author wishes to state that the four dates printed in *Thysia* were dates of incident, inserted for the guidance of friends, and had no reference to the composition of the poems, which came considerably later.

963878

CONTENTS

PART I. THRENODIES

SERIES I. SORROW

		PAGE
I.	THE FIRST VIOLET	3
II.	ANNIVERSARY	5
III.	OUR HAUNTS	6
IV.	OUR HOME	8
V.	THE NIGHTINGALE	10
VI.	THE SWALLOW	12
VII.	REMEMBRANCE	14
VIII.	AUTUMN	15
IX.	MONTREUX	17
X.	THE ROBIN	19

SERIES II. HOPE

I.	OUR SEASONS	21
II.	HUMAN AND DIVINE	23
III.	EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY	24
IV.	CONFLICT—(i) HESPER	27
V.	CONFLICT—(ii) PHOSPHOR	28
VI.	EPILOGUE (FINITE AND INFINITE)	29

Part II. SKETCHES

PAGE

I. The River Stort 33
II. Dunkeld 34
III. On the Lincolnshire Coast 35
IV. Trengwainton Carn 36
V. The River Nene 38
VI. Rain 40
VII. A Tidal River 42
VIII. A Hedge 44
IX. A Ditch 46
X. A Village 48
XI. A Frost 50
XII. A Fog 51

Part III. OTHER POEMS

A Broken and a Contrite Heart (To a Friend. Allegorical):

I. To the Friend 55
II. First Song: In a Park 57
III. Second Song: Three Women 58
IV. Third Song: A Love Story 60
V. Fourth Song: To a Friend 61

Memories. I. 62
Memories. II. 63

Scenes from a Love Drama (More or Less Allegorical):

I. A May Meeting 64
II. A Reflection 66

PAGE

III. A Parable 67
IV. A Memory 68
V. Renunciation 69
VI. Nepenthe 71
VII. A Truce 72
VIII. A June Meeting 73
IX. The Moon to the Sea 74
X. The Brook to the Star 75
XI. Uranian Venus 76
XII. Earth and Love 77
XIII. An Autumn Meeting 78
XIV. An Autumn Parting 79
XV. Epilogue (i). Sic Transit. A Preamble . 80
XVI. Epilogue (ii). Infinity 81
A Song about a Song. To —— 82

PART I

THRENODIES

SERIES I. SORROW

I

THE FIRST VIOLET

YOU firstling of the beauteous year,
  You, darling of the April glade,
Sweet violet, to me more dear
  Than any song by poet made;
And if I set you here in rhyme,
  In weak sad rhyme, the world shall see
I loved you in your dewy prime,
  A lifelong bond, a mystery.

How often when a boy I stood
  By banks where early sunlight slept,
And saw the leafing elderwood,
  While at my foot wild parsley crept;
I knew them both, and hail'd the sign,
  And when I found you hidden, coy,
And your blue eye look'd into mine,
  I met it with a rapturous joy.

And oh that morn of youthful spring
When sang the bird and flash'd the light,
She stood beside our fairy-ring,
My first, last love, so sweet, so bright;
I touch'd her lips with one shy kiss,
She blush'd, but held a violet—
"First of the year, I give you this"—
And on my heart I wear it yet.

And oh, the happy years that fled,
And ah, the spring-time and that morn
I placed you near her pillow'd head,
My first, last love, my love forlorn;
"First of the year" (her lips I press'd)
"I give you this;" she smiled and sigh'd,
Then softly laid you in her breast,
And you were with her when she died.

II

ANNIVERSARY

DEAD is the sullen year that brought me death;
But sorrow lives, tho' the dull nerves decay;
My life is like this dying gale's last breath,
Or night, that kills this brief November day.
Once more I watch within your silent room;
Without, the rain falls chill, drips the dead leaf;
Your little shoes, your glove, lie in the gloom;
Nothing is changed, nor changed in aught my grief.
"Grief is your idol, and not love," they cry,
"To God and her and heaven uplift your prayer;"—
Nay, let me grieve; grief is my Rosemary,
My Love-in-Absence, tended with due care:—
Nay, let me weep, and thro' the barren years
Feed my poor flower of love with passionate tears.

III

OUR HAUNTS

OUR haunt sweet meadows musical
With trill of lark and bleat of lamb,
Or where we gather'd in the dale
Rare orchis and wild marjoram,
Or grassy walks with many a rill
And many a diamond waterfall,
And far fair scenes of sky and hill,
And you the fairest of them all.

And sweet, how sweet, the glad spring grove
And all its budding harmonies,
When every bird told tales of love,
And love was lisp'd by each young breeze;
And there would hum the twilight bee,
And there we heard the cuckoo call
To bluebell and anemone
And you, the fairest flower of all.

And sweeter yet to stray or stand
By the dear bank of this lone stream;

Here lip to lip or hand to hand
We saw our blended shadows gleam;
'Tis vain, but I could almost pray
Under this heaven of star and dew
That I might quit the feverous clay
And in the wave find peace and you.

IV

OUR HOME

THE spacious Down, the gleaming tide
  Of Severn, and the far blue hills,
The hills of Wales; the Avonside,
  Its woods that hid rathe daffodils;
The high-suspended Bridge; below,
  Tall ship, grey cliff and pasturing vale,
The giant elms in stately row,
  The glades that heard the nightingale;

In sight of these our home was set,
  On scenes like these our hearts were fed;
We roam'd, we found the violet,
  Or shared the feast by summer spread;
We trod the scented autumn leaf,
  And when the world was dumb with snow
Together sang sweet lays of grief
  Or love in ages long ago.

Fair scenes, beloved of her and me,
  And dearer than all memory tells,

My dust may linger by the sea,
  But here my spirit ever dwells;
And as I leave the sacred walls
  To sojourn by that lonely shore,
Again the shadow on me falls
  And she I love is lost once more.

V

THE NIGHTINGALE

O NIGHTINGALE, to you I sing,
And tremble in my human song;
A prelude of despair I bring,
And quaver thus, "Forgive the wrong;"
For tho' my heart should fly to you,
Or yours within my breast prevail,
My voice would mar the music due,
O lord of song, sweet nightingale.

A careless boy I heard you first,
And then you sang the livelong day,
But best I loved the song that burst
At evening on my lonely way
Beside the river, where the leaf
Darken'd above the waters pale—
"O joy O joy, O grief O grief,"
'Twas thus you sang, sweet nightingale.

Again I heard you when my love
Was with me, waiting for your tune;

'Twas midnight, near the Bridge; above,
Cloudless, the tender heaven of June;
There while we stood, your music rang
Far-pealing thro' the summer dale—
'Twas "love love love," you sang you sang,
And "joy joy joy," sweet nightingale.

O nightingale, the summer land
Is sorrow, sorrow, day by day;
'Tis by a little grave I stand
This midnight, listening to your lay;
For she is gone, and I ere long
Shall follow thro' the silent vale
Of Shadow, and to-night your song
Is only sad, sweet nightingale.

VI

THE SWALLOW

O SWALLOW, let me pipe to you
My soft sad lay of tenderness,
For you are fair and swift and true,
And she was fair, and swift to bless;
She saw you from her greening bower
When Heaven was bringing back the light
The cuckoo and the cuckoo-flower
And all sweet things of sound and sight.

We loved you, for you shared our home
And told your love beneath our eaves,
And oft at sunset we would roam
And watch you thro' the willow leaves
Dip on the wave with happy wing,
Then skim away, and turn, and pass
To sweep the myriad-blossoming
Moon-daisies in the summer grass.

'Tis autumn, and the year is dead
Or dying, and you soon must fly;

Ah, swallow, for my love has fled
To seek, like you, a kinder sky;
Blithe bird, and you will come again,
And all be spring-time as before,
But for my love I wait in vain,
And mourn, for she will come no more.

VII

REMEMBRANCE

ONE comfort have I in despair
Beloved, for the ear, the eye
Yet gather from this earth and air
The sad relief of memory;
Nor could that love-lorn nightingale
Fill my lone heart with tender pain
When by your grave or thro' the dale
Trembled a stiller, finer strain.

In all sweet sound your voice I hear,
In all fair sight your face I see;
The spring, the summer bloom is dear,
And brings your beauty back to me;
Your presence dwells where'er I pass,
And hill and stream and field and grove,
Those bright moon-daisies in the grass—
All live your life and breathe your love.

VIII

AUTUMN

AH me, the year is growing old,
And sick withal, and numb with grief;
Drear is the stubble; from the wold
No song of bird; the weary leaf
Falls thro' the stagnant air, and dies;
The dormouse finds his living tomb;
Only where one last sunbeam lies
The drone dreams on the ivy-bloom.

Ah me, the world is growing old;
Its flower of faith, its fruit of truth—
(Again the autumn tale is told)
Faded and fallen; its fires of youth
To dying ashes turn'd; no more
Light leads us, or the joy of song
Or any joy; 'tis dark before,
And cold, and winter comes ere long.

Ah me, that grave is growing old
As one by one the slow months pass,

And o'er it sigh the breezes cold,
  Or shiver in its autumn grass;
O love, who liest in that sad ground,
  Ah listen to my autumn moan;
Like those long grasses on thy mound
  My grief, my yearlong grief, has grown.

Ah me, my life is growing old
  And sere and sad and wearisome,
A fading legend once more told
  Of strange days past, of death to come;
Is there no trust that all ends well,
  No faith in love, no hope of spring?
Come, Death, for you alone can tell
  The secret of our sorrowing.

IX

MONTREUX

THE vision, the voluptuous dream,
Montreux—it dwells with me to-day;
Sadly I take it for my theme,
For she I loved is far away;
She was a part of all things there,
The beauty, pathos, majesty;
All things were fair, for she was fair,
And she, my love, is lost to me.

The glory of the terraced shore,
The bright lake's level loveliness,
The heights ablaze with flowers, no more
Have power to dazzle or to bless;
The music of the waterfall
It dies away in threnody,
As thro' the glen faint echoes call—
"My love, my love is lost to me.

Only the gloom of silent glades
Attracts me, where my fancy ran

To wander with the quiet shades
  Of Byron, Arnold, Obermann;
These I recall, and muse and weep
  For Rousseau's fateful memory,
Then murmur softly, as in sleep,
  "My love, my life is lost to me."

X

THE ROBIN

O MORE than bird, an honour'd guest,
Robin, I set you in my song;
The simplest note will serve you best,
Or I should do my fancy wrong;
How glad each year when cold winds came
We gave you welcome, she and I;
We had no child to bear our name;
You were our little family.

And you remember, on the seat
Near those high spires of chestnut-flower
Where we could see the waters meet,
You sang beside us many an hour
Fearless and gay and debonair;
Or later, 'neath a heaven of glass
You chirrupp'd, while she gather'd there
Pansy and fern and beaded grass.

* * * * *

The season withers; to the ground
Falls sadly all the summer's pride;

I'll have no marble on that mound
To tell our name, and how we died;
But if our loss your memory grieves
Come, trill your carol as before
Till hidden by the fallen leaves
Our dust shall sleep for evermore.

SERIES II. HOPE

I

OUR SEASONS

WE had three seasons; I have one;
The three, the one, I softly sing,
And he should chide the heaven, the sun,
Who tires to hear of love and spring;
O spring, O love, O faith, O hope,—
So warble, bird, and carol, bee,
And burst on every sunlit slope
Blossom, and leaf, and ecstasy.

Nor less thy rapture, summer sweet,
Could charm the eye or fill the breast;
We felt amid the genial heat
The tranquil joy of joy possess'd;
Nor less we loved, where'er we came,
The scent, the song, the sheltering tree,
And every flower of tender name,
Red-robin, speedwell, rosemary.

I cannot sing of autumn here;
  I sing the autumn of our love;
She faded with the fading year,
  The tuneless bird, the ruin'd grove;
Bare was the glebe, the rick-cloth furl'd;
  The swallow muster'd for his flight;
Then cold mist filled the silent world,
  And she was hidden from my sight.

Winter is mine, and mine alone
  Thro' all the years of April bloom
And music and the summer sun,
  By night, by day, a changeless gloom;
And yet a secret spring-like bliss
  Sleeps in my wintry heart;—O death,
If God had given no hint of this
  I would not draw one hopeless breath.

II

HUMAN AND DIVINE

THE fairest bud in April shade
  Or meadow where the cowslip blows,
The fairest hedgerow overlaid
  With Mid-may's bloom or summer rose,
The fairest flower at summer's fall,
  Frail harebell and sweet clematis,—
O love in Heaven, I'd give them all
  For one brief moment of thy bliss.

I cannot think of thee as sad,
  I know thou art forever fair,
And I shall see with vision glad
  Thy human eyes and lips and hair;
And yet a Spirit, thou, that bends
  In love to watch me where I weep,—
A god-like love which comprehends
  The highest height, the deepest deep.

III

EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY

Prologue

WITH trembling lips, O world, I sing
  Our ways and words of love, and tell
The sweetness of the earthly spring,
  The deep truth of the heavenly well;
Either is good, but one is high
  As deep; I hold that doctrine small
Which says we only breathe to die,
  That this is life, that life is all.

That man will cling to hope and trust,
  O love, your life should teach me this;
That man is something more than dust,
  O love, I learnt it from your kiss;
What proof? ah ye, the wise who see
  In earth our being and our bond,
Naught's proved nor disproved; Choice is free;
  Leave me my right to look beyond.

Our way of love a-twain to lie
  In those rich grasses near the stream;
There, guarded from the fervent sky
  By waving aspen boughs, to dream,
Or lay the noontide hour to rest,
  Or whisper passion swift and low,
Till lip to lip, and breast to breast
  Our hearts met in their overflow,

Then beat as one. O loved and lost,
  Even thro' these tears I see you there,
The gold the waving aspen tost
  Upon us, radiant in your hair;
Nor fairer grew the river flowers
  Beside you in sweet rivalry,
The blossom'd rush, the woodbine bowers,
  Iris and deep-vein'd bryony.

* * * * *

Our way of love—as one to roam
  The quiet grove, the balmy leas,
All silent, till they drew us home,
  That twilight world, those walks of peace;
Then breath'd we in the ear of heaven—
  "Belovèd, when this path is trod,
Life, great and God-like, shall be given
  Our souls, whose universe is God."

Our way of love, it was to sit
  Beside the midnight hearth, and hear
The storm, and watch the storm-cloud flit
  The deep mysterious hemisphere;
Then turn'd we each to each:—"Dear heart
  Take comfort; neither heights above
Nor depths beneath shall pine or part
  Our souls, whose universe is love."

Epilogue

Some find in mother earth the soul's full scope,
  And some thro' all eternity would rove;
The one thing hopeful—is our trick of hope,
  The one thing proven—our desire to prove.

IV

CONFLICT

I. HESPER

A SONG, my friend? Nay, 'tis a funeral dirge;
I sing of wither'd hopes, of wasted years,
The threescore years that tremble on death's verge;
I sing her loss, my loss, the loss of tears;
I sing the faded flower, the failing light,
These autumn leaves falling and sick and brown;
I sing the happy birds that take their flight,
And leave me here, chain'd, baffled, beaten down;
I sing of days misused, of strength misspent,
The wrong that triumph'd, the good deeds undone,
I sing of foes that came, and friends that went,
This ebbtide ocean and the setting sun;
I sing my panting heart, my shorten'd breath;
I sing the end—anguish, despair, and death.

V

CONFLICT

II. PHOSPHOR

A SONG, my friend? ay, surely; turn the page;
It shames me to have moan'd a dirge like this;
I sing—why not?—the blessedness of age,
Its memories of her, and love, and bliss;
I sing the folded flower, the quiet leaf,
That sleep awhile upon their mother's breast;
My song of autumn is of calm, not grief,
Nature, like me, is lying down to rest.
I sing the past, its losses or its gain,
For all is balanced in the Infinite Sum;
I sing, why not? a world of mingled pain,
Which shaped my being for the worlds to come;
I sing the God in whom I live and move,
I sing of endless life and endless love.

VI

EPILOGUE

Finite and Infinite

ONCE more a birthday dawns on my sad pain;
Lonely I rise to greet the summer sun,
And call the flowers, and gather yet again
A chaplet for the grave of her that 's gone.
Gone—whither? O thou God of life, not death,
God, not of things that seem, but things that are,
Flash my dull thought beyond the haze of breath,
The mist of time, the mirage of the star!
O Spirit-Love, who dwell'st with the Most High,
Be with me as I kneel beside thy flowers,
Here on the mound where thy cold ashes lie
And wait my coming thro' the silent hours,
When I shall love thee with a love divine
Tho' the dim ages mix my dust with thine.

PART II

SKETCHES

I

THE RIVER STORT

A ROOF of sky, torrid; on either hand
Banks dry, yet dripping dust, and steep at first,
Then curving to the gutter where I tread—
A trench last left by the forgetful stream,
Or furrow'd by the summer rain; half dry
This, clutching at my step with treacherous loam,
Sun-baked at top, and odorous with death.
On each side death; plashy forget-me-nots
Glued petal downward to stark naked roots
Of willows, parch'd themselves, and shrunk; near these
The shrivell'd iris or dishevell'd rush
Or bruised and pithy reed; beside my feet
Part clammy and part stiff, the river moss
Huddled in heaps. Nor even the water rat
Peers from his crumbling adit, but a crake
Lies dead where the long-banish'd minnow poised,
And watch'd the chary sunbeam of the spring
Play on the other bank till all was dark.

II

DUNKELD

WHEN from the Rumbling Bridge I turn'd,
On Birnam Hill the sunset burn'd,
On Craig-y-Barns its fire was seen,
It caught the crest of Craig-Vinean;
But the deep Strath in shadow lay
Where swept the torrent on its way,
Or fell in thunder and in rage
By Ossian's lonely Hermitage.
The distant pinewood darker grew,
A crimson flush'd the eastern blue,
And far beneath me I beheld
The twilight fall on fair Dunkeld.

In dreams the charmèd city lay,
In dreaming silver flow'd the Tay;
Dreamlike, the holy Minster nigh
Rose in its silent symmetry;
I stay'd my footsteps on the heath,
I linger'd o'er the scene beneath,
And gazed till life itself might seem
A dream within that lovelier dream.

III

ON THE LINCOLNSHIRE COAST

A FLAT monotony of weariness,
A shore without beginning, nay, nor end,
Wail'd over by the sea-fowl and the duck.
You pass from stubble, paste and stoneless, won
Not long ago from that same muddy brink,
Fenced with a mud-built dyke, on the sea side
Mud-mounded, and the water black as night;
The scene would look well, doubtless, in the dark.
Next you have isle and isthmus and a creek
Of sea-salt ooze, not water; rankest grass,
I grant it, where no grass should ever grow,
Ay, and the sheep thereon, curiously at fault
In the landscape—if it be landscape; but the sheep
Drive inland, as the coming salt impels.
And here beyond stretches a league of dim
Uncertain flatness, whether sea or shore.

IV

TRENGWAINTON CARN

WE left behind the holy door,
The mound, the carvèd stone,
And from the churchway and the moor
Silent we wander'd on.

And still by bracken, crag and tarn
We wander'd, you and I,
Till on the tall brow of the Carn
We paused in ecstasy.

The unplumb'd cloudless heaven of blue
Dipp'd to the wave's gold floor,
Woodland and lawn, beneath our view
Swept to a silver shore.

Like glittering fane of fairy-land
Or fabric of a dream
We saw the sea-girt Mountain stand
Crown'd with the last sunbeam.

The winds upon the ocean's breast
  Slumber'd in soft surcease,
'Twas summer calm and sabbath rest,
  And dreamy evening peace.

V

THE RIVER NENE

A WILDERNESS of water, the main stream
Mark'd out by willows standing half-trunk deep
Or more, if more aslant, their draggled locks
Tugg'd by the current. Otherwise you note
The river where the turgid eddy whirls
Waifs from the farmstead; 'tis a dreary world,
A world submerged. My point of view the gate
Which bars a railway crossing near the Coot;
This an old race-course, long disown'd, but dear
To her and me, who often used to meet
In summer ('tis now March) and spoke our troth
By a lone fairy-ring at yonder bend;
There the Coot hedgerows, barren and nigh drown'd,
Begin their double race to this dry gate,
Glad to escape the flood, as I this morn.
'Twas two hours since, and I at Lilford farm
Where it stands westward, not a mile away,
And near it the five hayricks, half afloat
By this. Our narrow bridge was broken down;
I took the field-way, swiftly wading thro'

The rising water to seek boat or punt,
And miss'd the path; I soused in trench and dyke,
Swam out of ponds, fell over fences, cotes,
Ploughs, harrows, wattles, mangolds, feeding-troughs
And burst thro' twenty hedges, keeping clear
Of willows, and the deadly swirl beneath.

VI

RAIN

I SIT within a garden by the sea
Which sparkles in the sunlight at my feet;
On the bright shore the happy children play;
A shallop poises on the windless blue
Under the tender blue dome of the sky;
Around me all is May and loveliness;
Sweet is the air, for every bird sings sweet,
And every flower breathes incense. But a change
Is whisper'd thro' the beauteous world; a cloud
Steals like a foe on the unguarded west,
And draws the sea-line shoreward; the blue deep
Listens and trembles as a frighten'd child,
Then shudders to a silver-grey; the gull
Flies inland screaming; on a distant road
The dust is whirling; here, above my head,
A shiver in the summer leaf foretells
Storm, and the ruin of all beauty. Down
Patter the drops distant and large at first,
Plashing; soon, with the rising wind, they drive
In horizontal streams that beat and drench

The bloom, and soak the pallid upturn'd leaf,
And drown the music of the hidden bird.
And down there on the shore disconsolate,
Like cattle on the waste, the children stand
Huddled, and every happy sound has died;
And all life dies or droops or vanishes
In misery; and sky and sea and shore
Commingle in the same distressful gloom.

VII

A TIDAL RIVER

YOUR boat is moor'd within the central town,
Not far from where the leat mourns as it yields
A fresh young tribute to the ebbing salt.
'Tis well to take the river at ebb-tide
With some ten miles between you and the port
You make for, on this summer evening,—
A well-known trip, and worthy of its fame.
Your boat-house—an old cellar, the hind wall
Knock'd in, I fancy—is a gruesome place,
Mud-coated, gloomy, clammy, odorous,
The gates mud-spatter'd—everything is mud
Or muddy till you reach the little wharf
Outside the town. And there? now wait and see,
There 's mud enough to get thro' first; your rope,
Painter, to wit, is coated; all the backs
Oozed over,—outlet, basement, grating, sluice,
The piers of the two bridges, stair-ways, traps,
The hanging chain, clamp, staple, mooring-ring
Are basted with sad leavings of the tide.
Thro' this you punt, or scull with wavering oar,

Then hug the jetty. Decent this, at top,
But under, down where you are, who shall say?
As to the other bank—paint that? one line—
Piled faggots, smeared and baked, or dropping silt—
Not a word more or less; and so you leave
The jetty, and its loathsome opposite,
Merrily in mid-stream of hurrying mire.
You breathe a little, but before your time;
The channel widens, and the Virgin Mud
(Save for the furrow of some former keel)
Low shoal, or isle, or statelier promontory
Shutting the world out, lures you to your doom.
You know the bearings?—fairly? so did I,
And suffer'd. Look! too late! your bow is fast!
You probe three treacherous feet with a rash oar,
Withdraw it; the mud gurgles, and your boat
Is firmly bedded without sight of coast;
And there you wait for the incoming tide.
But the dews fall, the summer stars look down
Twinkling with wonderment; and you—you sleep
And dream the distant glory of the day.

VIII

A HEDGE

HERE is the living picture of a hedge,
If you will come with me some twenty yards
Along this common treasure of our land.
At foot a shallow trench; a bank breast high;
Above, a maze of blossom, thorn and sloe;
At back, a covert; to the front a field
And the due south. The shallow trench is dry,
But here all growth is thicker; king-cups gay,
Lush beds of the wild parsley and tall dock,
Quaint arum, honey'd cowslip, celandine,
And the first cuckoo-flower. Now the bank;
A scantier growth of herbage, plant, and bloom,
And yet a wildering paradise of sweet
And beauty and delight, found only thus
On our dear English hedgerows; violets
Late, but still welcome; primrose pale, but fair,
The shining crane's-bill, the bright adder's-meat,
Sorrel and speedwell and anemone,
The graceful bluebell and the orchis rare,
And earliest bud of woodbine. Now we reach

The upper thicket, wonderful with white
Of the full-blowing hawthorn; the whole land
Seems garmented in light, and all the air
Is fragrance. But the hedge is still my task;
Here is the home of myriad tender things
That creep or run or fly; the nightingale
Sings to his nesting mate; the rabbit here
Burrows beneath the roots of an old elm;
Look, on the trunk, plying unbrokenly,
A double line of ants goes up and down
To forage high above; and while I watch,
Two starlings, with a brood in that snug hole
Watch me; the mother bird dares not approach,
But flutters in distressful doubt; at last
She bills her dainty to the waiting sire;
He, bolder, bears it to his clamorous young.

IX

A DITCH

SOME yards of pathway daisy-sprinkled; then
A stile to the next meadow, opening thro'
A hedge of maple, haw, and bramble-rose.
Looking beyond the stile, twelve miles away,
The winding silver of a stream, a spire
Of gold, the golden sunset, this you see,
And all is glorious. But beneath the stile
There runs—lies rather, and along the hedge,
Dark water (so it seems) not three feet wide,
Wondrous, perhaps as glorious, and my theme.
Wondrous—ay, surely; from a boy I loved
The lure of water, mostly the still pool
Where summer cloud floated in fathomless blue,
A nearer heaven; so in this dyke I watch
The inverted firmament. Then moving down
From where I sit, I take a closer view,
Peer at the worldlings in their narrow world,
Tadpole, the larva of the dragon-fly,
The sailing gnat, the diving beetle, shapes
Of minute water life, innumerable,
Not to be pencill'd here; I sketch at large,
The detail you supply; where I precede

(If haply I may win you with my sketch)
You follow, come, and look, and see, and love.
You love the tiny rounded leaf afloat
Beneath the brink—the verdurous brink, itself—
'Tis now near hay-time—lost in its own wealth,
Tall meadow grass and fern and profuse flower,
A living book, a summer homily.
You love the water life, the water bloom,
The mimic grove waving with light and shade,
Dark alleys flitted thro' by elfin forms;
You love each plant of moisten'd stem, the flag,
Crowfoot, forget-me-not, and marigold;
You love the clustering cress, the wading sedge,
The long and languorous mosses where they sway
Soft as a dream; all this you love;—but more—
More always, if you linger for an hour;—
To-night a chafer, Shakespeare's shard-borne beetle,
Blunders against a bramble near my head,
And in my ditch drops dazed; I fish him out;
"There 's something wrong, my friend," thus I begin;
"Imperfectly adjusted, sir, as yet,
To my surroundings; you remember, sir,
'Against the pilgrim borne in heedless hum—'
A line of Collins, I believe." "Let be
The poets," I laugh'd, "and look to your wet shard;
Study environment, and mend your ways;
You won't have me to fish you out again."
But now the dusk had fallen, and it fill'd
With dark the regions of my water-world.

X

A VILLAGE

I PAINT it as I knew it, hardly less,
Or more, this village; paint it in the spring;
In winter it is desolation's home,
And death's; tho' even here, as I admit,
The sun can warm the blood, and set the world
Ablaze with glory. Well, 'tis early spring,
A week or two before the swallow comes,
Or the prime hawthorn breaks its bud; not so,
One bush I now remember, near the pond,
Shelter'd from east, and sucking at the mud,
Shows its first leaf to the first celandine,
And blossoms with the blackthorn. In a wood
Nigh this, wind-swept and thin, the daffodil
Is nodding at the primrose—shuddering
Perhaps; the trees are rare, the wind is chill.
In this near wood, too slender for the name
(Oasis in a desert 'twas to me
With miles of level ploughland on my brain)
You find perhaps the arum; not as yet
The pearly sorrel or anemone
No, nor the violet. For, strange to say,
That flower is scanty here as happiness;

Such dearth of either have I never known
In hamlet; you would seek it—'tis the flower
I mean, the blue one, not the pink, nor white,
In the top hedgerow of a clover field;
The field slopes south, and barren as the road
Just now, tho' barely half as rough; our roads
Four inches of snow, stone or dust or mud,
So, with the season. But the clover field;
You pass along that hedgerow in July,
Believe me, you will nearly faint with sweet
Of the warm wind breathing across full bloom
Of twenty acres. Now I turn to man,
And his contrivances, chiefly of ill.
The church, you say? a useful edifice
If you could fill it full of worshippers;
But all I saw—and that was twice a week—
A cold two dozen gaping half their time,
Spite of a surpliced choir in hob-nail boots.
The church, its how or why, heaven may know,
I don't. You seat a thousand, and the hamlet
Is just a few poor roofs, mostly of thatch,
And mostly weed-grown, a fat rectory,
A shop, a beer-house, farm-house, and a mill.
I rented one thatch'd roof; five shillings per week,
Small room; yet in the next, its counterpart,
Seven souls, one mad, were miserably housed.
I used to fly the place, and find my life
Again, at week ends, in a London fog.

XI

A FROST

MISTY the morn at first, now fired with light
Of the new-risen sun—a dazzling world,
For every tree or plant or smallest shoot
Or winter stalk, thick crusted with the rime,
Stands glorified, transfigured, wonderful,
A growth of brilliants and alabaster.
This nearest pine-branch, tuft or tiny spike
Sparkles with diamond and amethyst,
Ruby and beryl; the long avenue,
A hall of splendour, is ablaze with gems,
Pillar'd with crystal, garlanded with pearl;
The roof, a miracle of tracery,
Woven of coral white and radiant
Glitters, and all the interspaces fill'd
With heaven's intensest blue, or here and there
Flash'd thro' with gold, or pendent with festoons
Of gleaming silver; 'tis a fairy world.
At every turn new wonder; jewel-laden
The crown of that tall elm; jewel-besprent,
Dead grass or rankest weed, and the mere hedge
Has on its coverlet of marvellous sheen,
A beaded and embroider'd blazonry.

XII

A FOG

WESTWARD the flush of sunset, tho' the sun
Sank when I left the hill-top, and the light
Is fading from the valley at my feet.
Nightfall in autumn; yet the air is warm,
And heavy with the scent of marjoram,
And down there by the stream made heavier still
With the strong breathing of the water-mint
And spices of the mallow and the rush.
Nightfall in autumn; soon the air is chill;
No bird, nor bleat of lamb, nor evening breeze;
The dark metallic silver of the stream
Sleeps with the mirror'd alder, and my soul
Will paint itself into the sombre world.
  Nightfall and autumn and the dying year;
All by the line of alders, and long sedge
Stretches a thin blue haze, nor hides as yet
The willow, barren stem and leafless bole,
Nor the still gleaming fungus at its root,
Nor the rank grasses of the fairy-ring.
But night draws nearer, and the thin blue haze
Is whitening into vapour; gradual,

Mysterious, it grows and folds and creeps.
And first it steals upon the stream, and lies
Level with either bank, then overflows
Far on the distant meadow. Now it curls
Backward upon itself, and filtering thro'
A bed of osier, covers with a flood
Of billowing white, the nearer bank, the mead
Fungus and fairy-ring. Now bolder grown
And loftier, spectral, gaunt, it stands or glides
Among high trees, or stalks from bush to bush;
The alders vanish, then the willow boles;
And broadening now and heightening with a slow
And silent sweep it buries all beneath,
And damp and cold and deathlike as a shroud
It clambers grimly up to where I watch
In sadness, touches, clings, then wraps me round
Not all unwilling, and thick night has come.

PART III

OTHER POEMS

TO A FRIEND

(ALLEGORICAL)

I

A BROKEN AND A CONTRITE HEART

THREE songs there are, but the fourth who knows?
I have loved it, the first of the three;
'Tis the song that the nightingale sang to the rose,
Of summer and ecstasy.

Three songs there are, but the fourth is one,
Tho' the second was my desire;
'Tis the song of the breeze to the morning sun,
Of splendour and fragrance and fire.

Three songs there are, but the fourth is afar
And the third was my heart's refrain;
'Tis the song of the brook to the evening star,
Of loneliness, beauty, and pain.

They faint, they die; but the fourth's from above,
I would sing it to you, my friend;
'Tis the song of the broken heart and its love
That faints not and fears no end.

II. First Song

IN A PARK

HAVE you sat by this lake in a sweet June hour,
When the lily was kiss'd by the bee,
And the butterfly poised on that passion-flower—
Then you know my love and me.

Have you heard the throstle's rapturous strain
In the heart of that Ilex tree
To the one year mate he will meet not again—
Then you know my love and me.

And there—you can breathe it, that pine-wood's scent,
For it lies on you wearily,—
Did you feel the breeze as it came and went—
Then you know my love and me.

And there in the lake is a Venus of stone,
And I stare at it dreamily,
For here by the bank I am standing alone,
And you know my love and me.

III. Second Song

THREE WOMEN

NOW softly let the song be sung
Of three fair women I have met;
The first is spring-like, modest, young,
In all her ways a violet;
She must be sought, she loves the shade,
She must be won by honest worth,
And he that wins this perfect maid
Shall have the sweetest flower on earth.

The second is a rose, and free
And fair and fragrant and divine;
All love, all beauty; to the bee
She bares her bosom; she is mine.
But not for ever. Let them seem
Sweet, those dear lips and hair and eyes—
And they are sweet; a passionate dream,
A fleeting dream of summer skies.

The third, they say, is also fair;
She sits beneath an autumn bower

Of nightshade, and her eyes and hair
  Are lovely like the blue-gold flower.
And deadly. If she catch your heart,
  She kills it with her blossoming wile
And poison; if not, you depart
  Between a shudder and a smile.

IV. Third Song

A LOVE STORY

OH light was the flight and merry the lay
Of the linnet his mate pursuing,
And the sunbeam danced with the squirrel at play
Where the ring-dove sat a-cooing;
'Twas song and blossom by night, by day,
When my love and I were wooing.

And sweet was the heat the twilight spread
In that beautiful still June weather,
And soft our pillow and bonny our bed
Of peat-moss, bracken, and heather,
And the slender harebell bow'd her head
When my love and I were together.

But the harebell dropt a tender tear
As the fawn from the dews upstarted,
And I kiss'd her brow, my love, my dear,
And then we twain were parted,
And one is dead this many a year,
And one is broken-hearted.

V. Fourth Song

TO A FRIEND

Prologue

THE song of the brook to the star
You have heard, and will hear it again;
Where love and death and beauty are,
It sigheth its sad refrain;
Yet surely as sweet—or sweeter far—
Is the deep calm of pain.

* * * * * *

Mysterious friend, unseen as yet, unheard,
Known thro' the finer sense of soul to soul,
My thought flies out to reach thee as a bird
Wings his true way to some far distant goal.
To-night I think of her and love and thee,
And as I marvel by this silent shore
A sacred whisper steals across the sea
From ages when the sea shall be no more;
And as I watch the last light in the west
Fade, while the holy stars bring benison,
I think of her and thee and love and rest
In that new world where there is no more sun,
Where sigh shall not be heard, nor tear shall fall,
Where God Himself shall be our sun, our all.

MEMORIES

I

WE sat where cottage flowers grew wild
Beneath the summer tree;
Two angels on my sadness smiled,
My heart beat charmedly.

* * * * * *

Fair at our feet the landscape lies,
Fair is the sunset sky,
And fair the Holy Ruins rise
With dream-like tracery.

Wye softlier flows; the moon-lit flower
Hangs tranced; the moments flee;
And priceless till my dying hour
Their memory to me.

MEMORIES

II

WE sat once more, a mystic three,
Where woodland ways are sweet;
Above our heads the autumn tree,
Fair Amesbury at our feet.

Once more as to a soul in pain,
Two angels softly press'd;
My charmèd heart, it beat again
In peace and perfect rest.

O life, long sickening unto death,
Smile at the weary way,
And breathe it with thy latest breath
The memory of that day.

SCENES FROM A LOVE DRAMA

(MORE OR LESS ALLEGORICAL)

I

A MAY MEETING

OH spring-time is here, and my love is here,
And the turtle-doves are singing,
And my heart is full of the perfumed year
That the woodland breeze is bringing,
And carols the brook, for my love is near,
And it sets the blue-bells ringing.

And here we lie, my lady and I,
By the brook in the morning splendour,
But there 's not a glory in all the sky
That the fairest morn could lend her,
Tho' the sunbeams glance from her sweet blue eye
Ere they fall on the blue-bells tender.

And here it is well my vows to tell
To her fresh young heart, my sweeting,
And I lead her home at the evening bell,
And never was such May meeting,
For the brook it babbles a soft farewell,
And the blue-bells wave their greeting.

II

A REFLECTION

WHAT is the meaning of this mighty frame
Of earth and sky and sun and kindred star;
Why drove the day his chariot of gold flame,
Why guides the regent moon her silver car?
Surely to-night I read the truth anew;
One meaning of it all—O love—is you.

Why is the world so beautiful to-night,
The moon so tender, the deep heaven so blue,
Fairer the flower, and the balm-dew more light,
While softer than the flower and honey'd dew
Sweet peace lies on my soul?—Dear, I divine
Once more the answer—you; for you are mine.

III

A PARABLE

AH see, Beloved, the image of our fate:—
Like as twin flames from the dim hearth ascend,
Two sudden flames that leap and kiss and mate
Till their bright essences for ever blend;
Or as two breezes wander'd from the west,
Blowing thro' flowers at dawn, win their sweet way,
Each in the other's motion finding rest,
In song and flight and fragrance, one for aye;
Or as two mountain torrents flowing fast
Thro' the lone course in some cold peak begun,
Breathless, transfigured, and now join'd at last
Mingle glad waters in the morning sun,
Like these, Beloved, be my fate and thine,
So let thy deathless nature mix with mine.

IV

A MEMORY

ON a fair flower rested a butterfly,
Rested as light as melody on air,
Tho' breathing amorous breath, and amorously
Touching the dew, the balsam mingled there,
Just sighing, trembling to a touch so rare.

Stay'd only for that quivering fantasy,
So swift, so fine, nor ever folded wing,
Nor near'd the inner temple, where the bee
Might come at eve with some gold offering,
And worship, and away sweet honey bring.

So then it sway'd its painted vans for flight,
Nothing it brought, nor took, that passing fly;
"Nay," said the flower, "you brought me love's delight;"
"Nay," said the fly, "you gave love's ecstasy,
And now we live for each—a memory."

V

RENUNCIATION

SO then we came together, thou and I,
Suddenly, like two flames, subtle and bright,
Or like two breezes from a summer sky
To mingle among flowers their sweet and light,
Or like two mountain torrents tremulously
Blending at morn their beauty and their might,
Or like all tender things beneath the sun
That join their lives, and tremble into one.

Dear, hast thou sat beside a dying fire
That flicker'd from burnt letters of the dead,
Or heard the twilight's breath faint and expire
On the sea's heart anigh the sea-line red,
Or seen the river, when our thirst was dire,
A sicken'd dust within its summer bed—
These thou hast heard and seen; ah, verily;
Or see them here; for such as these am I.

Friend of my weary soul, leave me, divide;
Thou art too fair to mate with misery;

I will not have an angel for a bride,
Not here, not here; I'll love a dream like thee
Until I shape thee ever by my side,
Yea, close as my thin shadow thou shalt be;
And closer than the grossest things that seem;
It is enough; I thank thee for the dream.

Ah yet, when birds are glad, and star-like flowers
Sparkle from spring's earth-heaven, and fancies light
With swallow pinions chase the delicate hours,
I will come sometimes to thy rest at night,
And melt my phantom soul in true-love showers
Shall make thy dreams all wonder and delight;
Or come thou, moon-like, in that blissful May,
And make my night more beautiful than day.

VI

NEPENTHE

THE nightingale sang to the rose
When autumn was nigh,
"Sweet sweet love, the brief summer goes,
And you fade, and I fly;
Kiss kiss kiss, with the day at its close,
And I'll warble good-bye."

Sigh'd the rose, "Nay, leave me not sweet,
To-night, nor at morn,
Tho' the summer be pleasant and fleet,
And the autumn forlorn;
Ah tarry; why hasten to meet
The sorrow unborn?"

Said the bird, "Sweet sweet love, let me fly
Ere my soul fails to sing,
Ere you falter and droop, and we die
Of our own heart-breaking;
Who knows—one last kiss, one good-bye—
We shall meet in the spring."

VII

A TRUCE

SAID the lily to the sun
"I have loved you tenderly,
And since dreary night was done
Your fierce fire has fed on me;
Dieth love when day is gone?
Meet me yet again at dawn."

Said my love unto my heart,
"Meet me by the lake to-morrow;
There again before we part
Let us tell our joy, our sorrow,
Yours of grief that sets you free,
Mine of love that prisons me."

VIII

A JUNE MEETING

SO we sat by the lake one brief June hour,
Her lips to my lips replying,
And a sunbeam lay on a lily flower,
And the bee to the rose went sighing,
For round us the roses had twined a bower,
And the lake-lily near us was lying.

"Oh love," she sigh'd, "for your heart is free,
Will you love me, and leave me never?
O love, for the roses are kiss'd by the bee,
And sweet things sunder and sever;
O love, my love, will you love but me,
And will you love me for ever?"

So I held her there in that bower of bliss,
My lips her lips pursuing,
And I said, "I will love you like this, like this,"
And never was such fair suing,
For the roses blush'd at every kiss,
And the lily witness'd our wooing.

IX

THE MOON TO THE SEA

NOW list with me some balladry
Befits that brief June hour;
'Tis the song of the moon to the midnight sea
Of tenderness, beauty and power.

"O love I sway your living streams,
And nearer heaven I hold you,
O love, I come in golden gleams
Till all my joy is told you,
O love, I bathe you in my beams,
And with my ardours fold you.

O love, the days will come and go
Dividing and estranging,
And love will die where love should grow,
And heart from heart be ranging,
But love like ours no chance can know,
Thro' all its years unchanging."

X

THE BROOK TO THE STAR

TWO carols there are, so follow me far
Thro' the meadows, and listen again;
'Tis that song of the brook to the evening star
Of loneliness, beauty and pain.

"Fair star that shinest as to save,
Ah, take this love I render,
And on my breast and in my wave
Lay all thine evening splendour,
The while thy golden locks I lave
With love as true, as tender.

O evening star, thy love, thy beam
With my lone waters blending,
Shine in me now, a living gleam,
Love's gift, and not his lending,
And mix thy beauty with my stream
Thro' all the years unending."

XI

URANIAN VENUS

O LISTEN, all fair things in earth and heaven,
This joy of morn that lasteth until even;

O listen why it comes and whence it came—
Ye winds, blow softly, if I breathe her name;

From yonder god-built sky flutter'd a dove;
Ye flowers, bloom sweetly, if I breathe her love;

Peace-bringer, comforter, to breast, to brow—
O stream, flow gently, as my life flows now;

An angel-woman with earth-heavenly ways—
Attend, ye hills, if I shall sound her praise;

And thou, O man, speak out; how fares 't with thee?
"No; speech is pride; I worship silently."

XII

EARTH AND LOVE

I HAVE gone forth beneath the sky at even,
Brushing thro' flowers the fairest of their year,
Breathing sweet dews that fell from infinite heaven,
While one thrush warbled, and one star rose clear.

I have gone softly where the noontide sea,
Lay in the arms of some majestic dream,
And bared my soul to God's Immensity,
And sunder'd things that are from things that seem.

All these and more of sweetness or of might
As man, methinks, should know them, I have known,
But dear, there is no beauty, no delight
Like thine, when thou and I have lain as one.

XIII

AN AUTUMN MEETING

OH the bird sang blithe from that autumn tree,
For he sang of passion undying,
And my beautiful love she stood by me,
Her carol to his replying,
For 'twas "Love, love, love, and for ever to be,
And never a note of sighing."

And the sun shone bright from that autumn sky,
For of winter he had no heeding,
And my love, my beautiful love, stood by,
My light, my life, my leading,
"Forever O love," so I made reply
To her beauty, her song, and her pleading.

And the bloom was fair in that autumn bower,
For it dream'd not of summer departing,
And my love stood by in her beauty and power,
And never was such sweet-hearting,
For 'twas love, love, love beyond death's dark hour,
And passion that knows no parting.

XIV

AN AUTUMN PARTING

OH the wind blows sore thro' that autumn tree,
With never an end of its sighing,
And the dead red leaves, they are whirl'd to me,
And leaves in the mire are lying,
And I hear the sob of the ebbing sea,
And the moan of sweet things dying.

And the wan stars weep from their autumn sky,
Between the storm-cloud sailing,
And I call in my anguish, "Ye stars on high,
Have ye any comfort availing?"
But they weep, they weep, without reply
To my love and its passionate wailing.

And the bloom lies dead in that autumn bower,
For by it the blast is sweeping,
And she lies folded, my love, my flower,
Where only the worm is creeping,
Where she sleeps alone at this midnight hour,
And the weary stars are weeping.

XV

EPILOGUE (i)

Sic Transit. A Preamble.

So runs my rhyme, "The Lily and the Bee—"
So fadeth in the fading of a year
The dream of love, its mortal pageantry,
The stage-play of a smile, a touch, a tear;
Now listen to some loftier balladry,
For no beginning and no end is here.

Yet here, in our low world of night and day,
With visions of delight how sweet to rest,
Fair dreams of shape or hue or heart's essay,
(And love and hope and woman are our best);
Alas! before they faint and fall away
I serve them with a rhyme, at love's behest.

One cadence clear shall end my minstrelsy,
"We hope, we rightly trust, we wrongly prove;"
Knowledge is fetter'd, but our faith is free,
Our kindliest faith—*God-ward for ever we move;*
Thus hoping, let me hymn the eternity,
The loveliness, the Godliness of love.

XVI

EPILOGUE (ii)

Infinity

"THOU sure and firm-set earth"—a poet's dream,
A vanishing dream, unstable as the air;
Firm-set, alas, nor sure, the things that seem;
They change and pass, and none their place declare.
Who shall divide his vision of the day
From death, and the still trances of the night,
Or clasp existence with an arm of clay?
Dead is the finite, life is infinite.
Vain quest to seek it in the circling sphere,
The starry height of heaven, the round of space;
Farther than these it ranges, yet more near,
Boundless within thee, boundless its wide embrace;
For life is God-like, and God is love; and thou—
Make thyself God's in His eternal Now.

A SONG ABOUT A SONG

TO ——

WHY not one song, a swan-song at the close—
There gathers sometime in the lurid west,
Long hushst, the threaten'd storm, and gleams and grows
And tears the sudden thunder from its breast;
Or as beneath the storm, full-flooded ocean
Blanch'd with fell wrath and foam, blinds the low day
So spends in one wild hour its heart's commotion,
Then, like my life, ebbs silently away;
Or as the western heaven, that dim day done,
Gives you the single splendour of its spell—
And who will barter with a setting sun
Whose glory is the glory of farewell?—
Nay, like the storm, the sunset, the full tide,
So came my lonely song, so lived, so died.

CHISWICK PRESS : CHARLES WHITTINGHAM AND CO.
TOOKS COURT, CHANCERY LANE, LONDON.

Los Angeles
This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

Form L9–20*m*-7,'61(C1437s4)444

PR
6023 Luce -
L9677th Threnodies

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL L
A 000 863

PR
6023
L9677th